

**Abstract 292**

**TITLE:** HIV/STD Risk Behaviors Among Youth in a Correctional Care Facility

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**BACKGROUND:** Each year, 640,000 youth between the ages of nine and twenty are admitted into the juvenile justice system in the United States, with an average daily population of over 53,000. The majority of these youth are between the ages of 15 and 17. Youth living in correctional care facilities represent a high-risk, under-served vulnerable, and population in need of effective risk reduction interventions. Such youth are likely to be disproportionately at risk HIV STDs, and other health problems linked to substance abuse, unprotected sex, and poor access to health care. In the present study, we describe the HIV-risk behaviors of youth living in residential care facilities in Colorado. These baseline data are part of an ongoing randomized HIV prevention trial.

**METHODS:** All youth entering the Lookout Mountain Detention Facility in Colorado between February 1997 and August 1998 served as the study population. Prior to receiving a health education curriculum, male youths, aged 12-19 years, were asked to complete a self-report, confidential survey. The instrument included questions about demographics, HIV knowledge, sexual behavior (including frequency of intercourse and condom use), alcohol and injected drug use.

**RESULTS:** Questionnaires were completed by 337 males. Subjects were predominantly Hispanic (43%). White (36%) and Black (19%). Preliminary results showed that 97% of the youth engaged in vaginal sex prior to their conviction; 46% percent used a condom the last time they had sex. Seventeen percent reported ever having anal sex. Within the previous three months, 85% of the youth reported having vaginal sex (28% reported never using a condom) and 7% reported having anal sex (37% reported never using a condom). The two most frequent reasons for not using a condom were having three or more vaginal sex partners in the three months before their placement in the correctional facility. Many youth had used either drugs (49%) or alcohol (40%) before they had vaginal sex the last time. Eight percent of the youth had used intravenous drugs at least once during their lifetime.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The need for effective HIV/STD prevention activities for youth in correctional facilities is confirmed by these base line rates of sexual intercourse, unprotected sex, and drug use and a testing interventions that meet the needs of these youth is clearly needed

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